

EIJB proposed cuts to be opposed at Friday's meeting

The Edinburgh Integration Joint Board is heading into what could be a lively meeting on Friday.

It was only on Friday of last week (at 4pm) that the papers for this week's meeting were published on the council website. It was a good time to hide bad news – and it was potentially bad news for 60+ organisations which were warned they would have all of their funding cut on 90 days' notice.

The report to be discussed on Friday was penned by Pat Togher, the Chief Officer of EIJB who [is returning soon](#) to a similar £180,000 or so a year post in Glasgow after only 12 months in his current position.

The board has been asked to hear verbal deputations in relation to agenda items in which the cuts were proposed from several organisations affected:

Name of body making a deputation	Amount received from EIJB last year
The Ripple Project	£87,703
The Health Agency in Wester Hailes	£170,287
Edinburgh Community Food	£160,426
Edinburgh Community Health Forum	£49,763
Health All Round	£185,548
Cyrenians	£74,970

Further deputations will be heard from the voluntary sector

representatives of the Adult Support and Protection Committee, the Edinburgh Trade Union Council, EVOC, Citizens Advice Edinburgh (CAE) , Community Help and Advice Initiative (CHAI) and Granton Information Centre (GIC).

The Edinburgh South West MP and former councillor, Dr Scott Arthur, has also written a letter to the board. In it he urges the board to reconsider, saying that his key concerns include lack of consultation, inaccurate information, a vague alternative proposal (the Public Social Partnership) and the severe consequences of funding cuts as well as job losses (which he estimates at around 200 in the sector).

Deputations:



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Return on investment

Many of the written deputations strike at the comments made in the lengthy report from the EIJB that there is little return on investment for many of these projects. The report suggested that only one project – Steady Steps run by Edinburgh Leisure – could represent value for each £ spent. Other deputations ask for a more detailed outline of the Public Social Partnership model which Mr Togher suggested would replace current arrangements.

CAE, CHAI and GIC say in their deputation that around “100 people would be placed at risk of redundancy if the EIJB vote in favour of this recommendation”.

The EIJB is faced with stemming a gap of up to £60 million in their £900 million budget, and the board chose to target dozens of organisations which do a great deal of good all over the city. The groundswell of opposition among politicians and charitable groups and bodies has been growing all week.



Leader of The City of Edinburgh Council Cammy Day. Photo: © 2022, Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

COUNCIL LEADER – “further discussion” needed

The Council Leader, Cammy Day, told The Edinburgh Reporter: “I have met with the chief officer of the EIJB to discuss my concerns, although sadly as a result of my diary commitments I cannot attend the meeting personally.

“I am pleased to see there is a composite motion put forward today. Labour have put forward an amendment to not accept in year cuts and work with the sector to find an alternative proposal which would allow the EIJB to accept it going forward

“I totally accept that the EIJB has been chronically underfunded to the tune of around £30 million since it was first set up by the SNP government. It has never properly recovered from that – there are increasing demands for social

care and the need for care packages is also increasing across the city, yet the appropriate budget is not increasing.

“Edinburgh is the lowest funded council in Scotland. I hope tomorrow that the EIJB board members will accept that this is not the right thing to proceed with, and that we can have a further discussion with EIJB members, the council and the third sector about how we move forward. I accept that there are cuts to be made because of the horrendous situation we find ourselves in.

“The UK Labour Government has just announced one of the best budgets we have seen. I hope that it will give additional monies to The Scottish Government. I will be writing to The Scottish Government tomorrow, asking them to pass on any Barnett consequential directly to local authorities to spend without any conditions attached.”

CROSS PARTY MOTION

The composite motion proposed by a cross-party group of councillors ([which can be read in the meeting papers here](#)) is set out in full below. If this is passed then it will allow the third sector organisations a bit of breathing space.

1. Since its inception, the EIJB has operated with a massive and unsustainable financial deficit of £32m;
2. Third sector partners and their volunteers make an invaluable contribution to our communities and are pivotal in keeping our citizens safe, well and active;
3. The proposal for in-year cuts would make a minimal saving in comparison to the overall in-year deficit but would have devastating impact on the residents who rely on these services;

4. Proposals around a potential future model for funding the third sector is due to come to the December board meeting for discussion;
5. Both the previous strategic plan, and the proposed new strategic plan for the IJB centre prevention, early intervention, community resilience and protecting our most vulnerable;
6. Limited engagement has taken place with the third sector to co-produce solutions to the funding shortfall;
Therefore deletes all recommendations and replaces with:
7. Agrees to retain the grants programme to at least the end of the financial year;
8. Agrees to note the report and refer it to CEC and NHSL for their consideration on how we can address the in-year financial deficit while protecting services and third sector organisations;
9. Agrees to hold discussions as soon as possible with NHS Lothian, the Council, and third sector organisations to consider alternative proposals for the long-term future of third-sector funding, mindful of the current financial position across the Scottish public sector and the need to meet EIJB objectives;
10. Agrees that budget discussions comply as far as possible with the Audit Scotland recommendation for “clear and open conversations with IJB partners, workforce, people who use services and other stakeholders around the difficult choices required to achieve financial sustainability”.

The Community Renewal Trust

The trust received £45,482 from the EIJB community grants programme. It works from two Edinburgh locations – one in Bingham and one in Muirhouse.

CEO John Halliday told The Edinburgh Reporter: “Community Renewal Trust is one of 60+ charities and community groups to be facing a 100% cut from Edinburgh’s council and NHS operated Integration Joint Board.

“This is not our organisation’s main funding, but is for a vital service based in the poorest neighbourhood in the whole of Edinburgh, intensively supporting people facing mental health and chronic pain related crises. Our particular project has avoided so many people being admitted to hospital, has reduced the amount of medication and GP appointments needed, has stopped multiple children needing to be taken into foster care, and has enabled older people to live better independently without needing a carer.

“In our case, our charity will survive, although the same cannot be said for all those local residents we would have been supporting. Much more than our own organisation and our own local community, we are primarily worried about the huge scale of these abrupt sweeping cuts on those residents with lowest life expectancy in every ward of the city.

“The decision is rumoured to be a decision based a sudden new ideology being introduced, one rejecting thirty years of established evidence in public health, community-based health and preventive health initiatives; it is perhaps an act of rebellion against the guidance of the Chief Medical Officer, Scottish Government and also Audit Scotland’s recommendations.

“Sadly, it will also be in vain, their own internal analysis [agenda 7.2, para 18, page 86] shows that even the most unrealistically optimistic forecast of the saving from this

£4.5m cut is actually less than £0.3m due to the rising cost on other health and care provision, likely associated with an immediate surge of demand for social carers, GP appointments and hospital admissions across Edinburgh.

“We are aware of at least 15 community groups and local charities which would close their whole organisation immediately and we estimate that a minimum of 108 jobs will be made redundant.”

The Health Agency Wester Hailes

The Health Agency is more than just a service provider, it acts as a community anchor organisation, helping drive forward community resilience in Health and wellbeing and provides essential health prevention work, these cuts would deal a significant blow to health prevention in the local area.

The Health Agency in Wester Hailes received £170,287 last year from this programme (which was in any case cut by 10% overall in the last financial year).

This agency is a lifeline to many who live in Edinburgh South West, providing free support to around 2,500 people experiencing health inequalities, with mental health services including counselling on offer. The organisation helps people with cancer, with long-term health conditions, offers help for those who want to learn to cook healthy food – and a food pantry helping with food insecurity.

A client of the agency said: “I just think there will be a lot more people with depression, you know, ended up with maybe a really severe depression and they wouldn’t be getting the help they needed. They would end up just not knowing where to go for help.”

A spokesperson for the agency said that this kind of self-

directed support “makes a significant contribution to the creation of a healthier, stronger and more robust community and has proven to reduce the pressure on frontline NHS services and statutory services”.

A local GP Dr Sineaid Bradshaw Deep End Gp and member of the Primary Care Facilitation Team said: *“As a GP working in Wester Hailes the services provided by the Health Agency are invaluable. We work closely in partnership with the Health agency who provide invaluable support to patients experiencing social isolation, long term health conditions, cancer, weight management issues, food insecurity and mental and emotional health challenges. I genuinely struggle to know how I would do my job without the support of the Health agency and feel incredibly concerned at the thought we could lose it. It also seems such a backward step to take money away from programmes which focus on promoting health and preventing illness. In my mind it will just incur huge costs on more expensive parts of the system e.g. secondary care.*

“The Health Agency is an indispensable resource for the overstretched GPs and nurses of Wester Hailes Medical Practice and surrounding surgeries struggling to provide adequate care and support in this area of multiple deprivation. How can we begin to meet the complex needs of our diverse population without the holistic input and creative solutions of partner organisations such as The Health Agency? Collaboration with community support structures is the only meaningful way to address the social determinants of health. Disinvesting in this essential service is a false economy and reinforces the Inverse Care Law.

“Primary care in areas of socio-economic deprivation is unsustainable without our third sector partners and this resource cannot be removed without woeful consequences.”

But above all the loss of this funding would mean a loss of £327,671 of funding from other sources.

Portobello Older People's Project

Lawrence Marshall is treasurer of one of the bodies which could be affected if the proposed cuts go ahead.

Mr Marshall volunteers anything up to 40 hours a week for Portobello Older People's Project (POPP) which received £14,620 from the EIJB in the last financial year. This project employs one person – an organiser who liaises with GPs who want to refer people to the group.

POPP is a lunch group for older people which meeting on two days each week. The organiser orders meals which are provided by the council from Portobello High School at a discounted rate, arranges transport from South Edinburgh Amenities Group (SEAG) to pick people up from their homes and then delivers them home again. She is assisted by a band of around 20 volunteers over the two days – two of whom have to be on the minibus during the journeys. POPP began three decades ago and Mr Marshall said it has always had funding from the council.

Mr Marshall – who was speaking to The Edinburgh Reporter in a personal capacity – said: “We reach about 20 frail elderly people in Portobello who otherwise would have to look elsewhere for company so as to avoid social isolation. We signpost people to other services – small things like small repairs to their homes. We also manage to have a couple of outings each year with the minibus – and SEAG is a charity which depends on our business so they will also be at risk.

“It would be a sin for that funding which represents 0.5% of the EIJB budget across the whole grants programme to be cancelled. We have gone through the financial crisis. We have gone through governments of different stripes and for it now to come to this is sinful. It erodes trust and respect for democratically elected councils – and we should not be in a position where elected councillors are eroding the social good in the city. We always thought we were safe because we are

probably one of the lowest awards on the grant programme. But they have taken a sledgehammer and smashed the whole thing. It is not a finessed process this year.”

The meeting of the Edinburgh Integration Joint Board will be held at the City Chambers at 10am.

[The papers are online here](#) and a link to the webcast where anyone may watch the meeting [is here.](#)



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